

Poets and Their Poetry: *Fall Arts and Sounds* Open House

As the Poet Laureate of North Andover, I was delighted when members of the North Andover Cultural Council asked if I would be interested in doing a poetry reading at the beautiful Rolling Ridge Conference Center in town as part of the *Fall Arts and Sounds* Open House. How could I say no? But I wanted to bring several voices, new voices to our community.

So on Sunday, November 1, 2009 I invited six poets to read/perform ORIGINAL poems, written in the Merrimack Valley and beyond, dealing with a wide variety of themes. The following includes a biography of each poet and one of the several poems they read/performed for the occasion. The poets included Diane Kendig, Jeff Roberts, Diane Giarrusso, David Shaw, Karen M. Kline, Ed Marshall, and myself, Gayle C. Heney.

Diane Kendig, poet, writer, and translator, has published four chapbooks, the most recent titled *The Places We Find Ourselves*. Her poetry and nonfiction have appeared in journals such as *J Journal*, *Ekphrasis*, *Minnesota Review*, and *Under the Sun*, as well as the anthologies *Letters to the World* and *Those Winter Sundays: Female Academics and their Working-Class Parents*. A recipient of a Fulbright lectureship and an NEH grant in translation and a Yaddo Fellowship, she currently lives in Lynn, Massachusetts and teaches at Bentley University and Salem State College.

THE FITCHBURG BEAR

Given the path of lapped-out garbage cans
and bird feeders rich with months-old,
unvisited suet, he came out of Lunenburg Forest,
down Lunenburg Street. Before that, no one
can imagine, this being a most civilized state,
we know, having spent the day tracking
Joseph Palmer, old iconoclast, jailed
for a year for growing a beard and expelled
from Fruitlands for drinking milk.
We *can* imagine how Alcott would feel
about doughnuts fried in some animal's deep grease.

But this bear was no ursine Emerson,
lumbering in to lecture in Fitchburg.
And unlike the Vermont moose who fell in love
with a cow and mooned at the fence for days,
the bear did not fall for a sheepdog or Rottweiler.
This was the James Beard of bears, a bear
as gourmandish as Siri, the India elephant who invented
this recipe for hay: step on an orange or apple
gently, rub fruit into straw, and serve.
He came to dine.

As happy as the gorillas who sing during dinner,
the bear wandered into the Bernadine Bowl,
maybe for the just desserts of track meets,
followed by police, ordered to shoot if the bear
got to Main Street, with all of its restaurants.
The citizens, intent that he'd live free not die,
ducked in and out of the gun sights, shouting
"Save our bear," leaving the police in a quandary
of how to keep the bear and not kill anyone.
The solution was so obvious I'm embarrassed,
but what do police care of triteness and narrative?

They sent out for two dozen doughnuts
that held the bear at bay one cake at a time.
He'd gulp one down, then sit back on his haunches,
just like a bear I saw once standing at the grill
of a family cowering in their car
while the Smoky Mountain native spiked
each of their hotdogs on a claw. He kissed one
to his mouth like a cocktail treat, rested,
kissed and rested ten times.
While the Fitchburg bear ate,
animal wardens were arriving with stun guns.

After an hour they hauled him
as he hibernated out of season
to Quabin Reservoir-- dreaming the bear dream
equal of an assignment to review Main Street cafes.
When he woke to twigs and berries
he had to wonder which was the dream.
Unlike Segismundo, he had the evidence,
the suet and doughnuts still slick
on his tongue, in his nose, the smell
of humans, stuffing him.

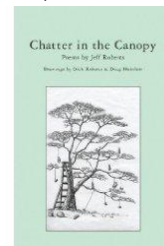
*First appeared in Grrrrr: A Collection of Poems About Bears, ed. CB Follet.
©2000 Diane Kendig*



Jeff Robert's poetry has been published in The Aureorean, Meanie Magazine, Recursive Angel, 15 Credibility Street, The Unpublished Author, The Hudson Street Review, The Pictish League, and Blood Pudding Press.

His poem, *Her Unusual Journey* won first place in the annual Lawrence Eagle-Tribune Poetry Contest (1999).

His book of poems, *Chatter in the Canopy*, was published in Jan 2009. The Aureorean, the Farmington Maine poetry journal, chose Jeff's poem *Beach Glass* as the "best poem" from its Spring/Summer 2009 edition.



Beach Glass

We could be the neck of a milk bottle
Or a bit of bobèche from a grand chandelier.

It doesn't matter what we were a part of
Before we were broken,
Only that we were broken
And a part of something -

That our young edges were sharply fragile -
Our translucence too common.

We know of waves, and still, now and then
Feel them vacuum the sand from beneath our feet -
Pulling us out and over and back, across the sand
As if we were something's great hobby
Tumbling in finer and finer and finer grit.

And it is the tumbling that matters
So much more than the approval
Of combers or children, for if we have time
The tumbling will give us a texture
That transcends the standards
By which we are judged.

We remember so little

Of how the tumbling smoothed us
Only that, in the end, we are smooth.

© Jeff Roberts

Diane Giarrusso is a professional librarian and Director of the Boxford Town Library. She has been a librarian since 1990 and earned her Master's in Library Science degree from Simmons College in 1993. Ms. Giarrusso facilitates a monthly Poetry Circle at the Boxford Town Library where poetry lovers read and respond to a variety of poems. She also has a blog called "Everything Flowers from Within" where she records her thoughts and some of her poetry. A natural performer, this is Diane's first time sharing her poems with an audience.

Nana

1.
Saturday, as I ran errands in the car,
I caught my reflection in the rear-view mirror and saw you.
My lips together, tight and turned down at the corners,
bottom lip hidden, deep in thought, a part of you lives through me.

2.
Three days in a row, I smell your porch
when I open the glass door at the end of the day.

The first day,
I thought it was a fluke, so odd, I discounted it.

The second day,
I rationalized it as an olfactory memory, nothing more.

The third day,
I wondered what you were trying to tell me.

3.
Corey's grin is all I need to remind me of you;
her eyes crinkle and almost disappear
in their half-moon shape of glee.

The humor in those eyes looks so much like yours,
I have to look twice.

Could it be that you've inhabited her body for just that moment;
a precious moment that reminds me of the joy I felt in your arms,
a moment that reminds me that we are all connected?

How can something so fragile looking as a strand of DNA
ensure that you are with me all the time?

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David Shaw, a retired teacher and educational administrator, enjoys art and music along with his poetry. He leans on both as well as his love for children and travel to produce his poetry and writing. He has had poetry published in the Haverhill Gazette. **David Shaw's** first book of poetry is called "It's About Thyme". Another is near ready for the printer. He has also written "Thistle in the Wind," which is a genealogy of one of the MacPherson lines, "Eye of the Beholder," which is a booklet designed for new parents of children with Downs Syndrome, and "The Sprite" which is a book for children of all ages. Currently, he is the president of the Greater Haverhill Poets.

The Storm

The weather had been humid in the days before the storm.

'Twas hard to breathe the moist and heavy air.

The surface of the lake was glassy and the water, warm,

And all the fish had disappeared somewhere.

Behind the mountains, silhouetted o'er the distant bay,

Suggestions of the storm began to show.

The ordinary blue was changing to a dismal gray

And cast a shadow on the hills below.

And somewhere in the meadow, tiny critters ran to look

For shelter from the gathering event.

The meadow was in sunshine now, but every tiny nook

Would help survive what now was imminent.

The air went still and eerie and it turned a sickly green.

The cumuli rose up. They were the largest ever seen.

The little critters wondered just what all of this would mean.

But still it wasn't dark or light, but somewhere in between

And in the distance thunder rolled.

The once warm air turned deathly cold.

And sudden distant flashes told

The witness what this day would hold.

Black bottomed clouds came 'cross the sky and hovered overhead

And menaced all who cowered down below.

They spread, and writhed like capes on horrid ghosts of living dead

And as they grew the winds began to blow.

The ripples of the lake grew dark and larger in the gale.

And one could see the storm enshroud the pond.

The mountains on the other side were hidden in a veil

Of rain that came from Heaven and beyond.

And else where, in a meadow where the dark clouds would approach

The alders started swaying in the breeze.

Along the wooded border that the storm would soon encroach,

The leaves turned bottom up in all the trees.

The rain began to fall and then it came across the lake.

It's hiss became a loud and threat'ning sound.

At first the drops fell softly. We enjoy the sounds they make,

But soon the drops beat loudly on the ground.

With deaf'ning snaps the sky lit up, just like the gates of Hell.

A dozen forked tongues struck earth through ozone's acrid smell.

By: Dave Shaw © 2009

Karen M. Kline is a mother, poet and executive director of American Community Think Tank, which she founded in 1999 to encourage the creative imagination of children. ACTT has had programs in several American cities and towns, two cities in Canada and in Lahore, Pakistan. Ms. Kline has provided non-judgmental, low-cost events in art, enterprise, literature, media, music and nature by partnering with many local organizations over the years including: the Mo Vaughn Youth Development Foundation of Dorchester, public schools in Amesbury, Andover, Lawrence, North Andover, Fitchburg, Groton and Haverhill, MA and Plaistow, NH, the YWCA, Essex Art

Center, Blessed Stephen Bellesini Academy, Esperanza Academy, and Trails and Sails from the Essex Heritage Foundation. As a member of the Board of the Robert Frost Foundation of Lawrence, Ms. Kline has helped conduct yearly festivals, school poetry bees and other workshops. Ms. Kline was invited to present at the first-ever MA Poetry Festival in Lowell and was chosen again this year to give workshops at the Boston Children's Museum for the second annual festival.

listen

when wind blows
I hear it

moving ever so slightly
at first

in my mind's ear
I can hear
rustle ~ rustle ~ whoosh

in my mind's eye
I see
the long skirt billowing

flowing as she walks
walks toward the trees
in my imagination

she lives
even today

still in the same town
still on the same road

maybe she still writes
as she sits
'neath oak and maple

as limbs and leaves
rustle~ rustle ~ whoosh

as she watches her grandchild
playing 'mid sun and shadow

as she watches her grandchild
maybe she writes
words for the Ages

I wait

and listen . . .

Listen for Mistress Bradstreet

By: Karen M. Kline © 1998

Ed Marshall grew up in New England. He's a product of his surroundings----New England's mix of fields and factories, mills and mountains. Much of what he writes about can be seen through the windows of his New Hampshire home. He's a member of the Executive board of the Greater Haverhill Poets and the Lowell Poetry Network. His work has been featured on several occasions in the Arts League of Lowell Gallery. Ed Marshall's poems have appeared in several poetry anthologies including 'Poets Work Press' and two publications produced by the Greater Haverhill Poets---'Penn and Brush' and 'Voices of Haverhill'. His poetry was chosen to appear alongside visual art in the book entitled---Randy Loubier---An Extraordinary Journey from Accountant to Artist and in several magazines including Shakespeare's Monkey and Sacred Pathways.

Ed Marshall self-published 3 hand-bound volumes of four-line poems entitled: "Sandalwood," "Lilacs" and "Ripples".

every night

alzheimer wind

blows another book mark

from my mother's diary

By: Ed Marshall

Gayle C. Heney is North Andover's Poet Laureate. Her poems have appeared in the poetry anthology Moments Falling Open, *The Writer's Block* and *Peace Poetry 2009*. Ms. Heney judged and selected the poems included in the 2007 tribute to John Greenleaf Whittier entitled Voices of Haverhill. Ms. Heney created the "Poetry Wall" at the Stevens Memorial Library, which featured 284 original poems from Massachusetts' residents in celebration of National Poetry Month. She has taught poetry at libraries, senior centers, schools, the Essex Art Center and retirement communities. This year she's instructed 295 students in how to write experimental, ekphrastic and concrete poetry. "North Andover Middle School POETS" and its companion TV program grew out of that effort. She organized North Andover's first community Poetry Slam, in April 2009, which gave poets of all ages the opportunity to read, rap, sing, dance or perform their poetry. Ms. Heney founded and chairs "The Write Group," a support group for poets. Ms. Heney is the recipient of the 2006 Alliance for Community Media's National Award for Instructional Training. She is the producer and host

of *Write Now*, the cable TV show designed to encourage viewers to write. On May 1, 2009 she delivered the keynote address at Northern Essex Community College's Peace Poetry Contest. This fall, she was the only poet selected to participate in Essex LINC's, an history program in partnership with the Essex National Heritage Commission, National Archives, Beverly School System and Salem State College.

Dancing

Tumbling from mouth
Before brain

Hoping to excise
Fear and pain

Dancing words
Try to say

What we don't understand;
Each focusing

On what must be said
And what must not.

Pausing, gliding
We tango.

Gayle C. Heney © 2009



Poets featured in the *Fall Arts and Sounds* Open House at the Rolling Ridge Conference Center in North Andover on November 1, 2009 included: back row on the left Jeff Roberts, Poet Laureate Gayle C. Heney, Karen M. Kline, Diane Giarrusso, Ed Marshall, Dave Shaw, and in the front Diane Kendig.